

U.S. Serial No. 10/736,611
Attorney Docket No. 000600-023

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Applicants acknowledge the allowance of claims 1-17, with thanks.

The Examiner has rejected the device claims 18, 20, 22, 23, 26 and 27 and allowed claims 21, 24 and 25. However, there is an inconsistency at page 4 of the Office Action stating that claim 23 is allowed, but from the context it is assumed that it should be claim 25. Clarification is requested.

Claims 18, 20, 22, 26 and 27 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over U.S. Patent No. 4,958,933 (Zakich).

Zakich discloses a cooler-extruder device for cooling foamed plastic compositions prior to extrusion of the compositions through a forming die. The device comprises a barrel 32 enclosing feeding means made up of flights 34 machined on a flight's section 31 of a screw 30. The device further comprises a wiper section 33 made up of blade members 52 mounted on adjacent pairs of machined circular ridges 38 on the wiper section 33 of the screw 30. It appears that the wiper section 33 does not coincide with the flights section 31 forming the feeding means.

The Examiner has alleged that Zakich anticipates all limitations of claim 18 and that the disclosed device also could be used for preparing expanded thermoplastic microspheres. Applicants respectfully disagree.

Claim 18 recites that the scrapers are mounted on the feeding means and extending radially beyond the outer radius of the feeding means toward the inner surface of the hollow body. This feature is not present in Zakich, which describes blade members 52 present only at the wiper section of the screw 30, which does not constitute any feeding means. On the other hand, the feeding means in Zakich, i.e. the flight's section of the screw 30, does not include any blade members or any other kind of scrapers. Using the device of Zakich for expanding thermoplastic microspheres would involve the risk of congestion of microspheres in the wiper section as the driving force from the feeding means would be insufficient.

Accordingly, Zakich does not disclose any device comprising scrapers mounted on feeding means and extending radially beyond the outer radius of the feeding means

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toward the inner surface of a hollow body. Furthermore, there are no hints whatsoever in Zakich that would motivate a person skilled in the art to modify the disclosed devices in such a way. Therefore, the device as defined in claim 18 of the present invention is neither anticipated nor rendered obvious by the cited reference.

1217 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
(703) 299-0035

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Respectfully submitted,

WHITE, REDWAY & BROWN LLP

By: 

David J. Serbin
Registration No. 30,589